



SUDDEN ILLNESS Eight people die in, around polling centres

STAR REPORT

At least eight people, including a presiding officer, a polling officer, and a member of village police, died after falling ill inside or near polling stations during voting hours in seven districts yesterday.

In Khulna, a BNP leader died after falling ill following an altercation with a Jamaat activist.

The incident took place outside the Alia Madrasa polling centre in the city's Khan Jahan Ali Road area around 7:45am.

Mohibuzzaman Kochi, former office secretary of BNP's Khulna city unit, was declared dead on arrival at Khulna City Medical College Hospital.

In a statement, BNP's city unit claimed Kochi fell ill after he was pushed by the madrasa's former principal, Abdur Rashid Miah, following an altercation over seeking votes outside the polling station.

Meanwhile, Abdur Rashid admitted to journalists that there was an altercation but claimed he did not push anyone.

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Beaming with pride, a group of young women voters, who just cast their ballots for the first time, pose for a celebratory photo outside Dhanmondi Girls' High School polling centre yesterday.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

POLLS VIOLENCE 72 injured in 14 incidents

STAR REPORT

At least 72 people were injured in 14 incidents during polling across the country yesterday.

The violence disrupted voting at several centres, prompting interventions by police and army personnel. Law enforcers detained nine people in two incidents – five in Munshiganj and four in Jhalakathi.

Several incidents occurred near polling centres. However, swift action by law enforcers allowed voting to resume at the affected centres.

In Noakhali's Hatiya, at least 31 people, including a BTV journalist, were wounded in a clash between supporters of the National Citizen Party and BNP.

Hatiya Police Station Officer-in-Charge Saiful Alam said the clash was reportedly triggered by attempts to exert influence at a polling centre.

"Several people were injured in the incident. No complaint has been filed so far," the OC said.

In Bagerhat's Sharankhola, at least 19 people were hurt in a clash between supporters of Jamaat and BNP candidates. According to police and locals, the incident took place on a road leading to a polling centre in Sonatola village.

Four of the injured were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital and another four to Sharankhola Upazila Health Complex, they added.

In Meherpur, clashes between BNP and Jamaat supporters left nine people injured.

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Polls offers new chapters in US-Bangladesh ties Says US representative

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The elections in Bangladesh and Nepal following uprisings offer new chapters for US engagement in South Asia, US Representative Bill Huizenga said.

In an opening remark at a hearing on US foreign policy in South Asia on Wednesday, Huizenga, who is the chairman of South and Central Asia Subcommittee at the US Congress, said Bangladesh holds free polls following its 2024 July uprising, while Nepal, after the uprising, will hold democratic elections next month.

"Both of these instances offer new chapters for engagement in South Asia, defining US relations with these new governments," the US Representative from Michigan said.

He said South and Central Asia is a dynamic region, young growing populations are more often drawn to western cultures and values than to China's authoritarian alternative.

Huizenga said South and Central Asia is home to nearly two billion people, dynamic economies and strategic waterways that shape the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. Throughout the region, US President Donald Trump has successfully negotiated deals that open markets and advance US economic interests.

"Now we are going to engage and how we engage will define America's role in Asia for decades to come."

He said China, through its Belt and Road Initiative, engages in "predatory lending to further its security interests and force smaller nations into debt traps".

Furthermore, China has hardened its border with India, Nepal, and Bhutan, building infrastructure to support its military aspirations, Huizenga said.

"Despite its distance from our shores, maintaining a free and open Indian Ocean is a priority for our national and our economic security."

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Russia pounds Ukraine with drones, missiles

Odesa, Dnipro face outages, civilian injuries; Kyiv says attacks undermine Trump-led peace initiative

REUTERS

Russia pounded Ukraine with drones and ballistic missiles overnight yesterday, further battering its energy system and leaving tens of thousands in the southern city of Odesa, said Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Kuleba. He added that close to 200 buildings in the strategic Black Sea port were left without heating.

Russia has intensified its winter campaign of strikes on Ukraine's power grid, plunging major cities into long periods of cold and darkness in freezing temperatures.

In Kyiv alone, around 3,500 apartment buildings were without heating yesterday after the latest attack knocked out supplies to nearly 2,600 high-rises, on top of the 1,100 already affected by previous strikes, said Mayor Vitali Klitschko.

More than 100,000 families were without electricity, according to private energy firm DTEK, which said one of its thermal power plants had been targeted but did not disclose the location.

Two people were hurt in the attack on Kyiv, which also hit a residential building, Klitschko said.

Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 24 ballistic missiles, one cruise missile and 219 drones

overnight. Air defences downed or neutralised 16 missiles and 197 drones, it said.

Nearly 300,000 people were left without water as the attack disrupted power supplies in the southern city of Odesa, said Deputy Prime Minister Oleksiy Kuleba. He added that close to 200 buildings in the strategic Black Sea port were left without heating.

Two people were killed and six more wounded in an attack on the railway hub of Lozova in the northeastern Kharkiv region bordering Russia, prosecutors said.

Moscow has denied intentionally targeting civilians during the war although its attacks have killed thousands of them since it invaded at full scale in February 2022. Ukraine has also hit civilian targets

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Military administration chief Serhij Lysak said the attack also damaged an apartment building and sparked a fire that engulfed one of the city's markets, injuring one person.

In the industrial southeastern city of Dnipro, a combined missile and drone strike wounded four people, including a baby boy and a four-year-old girl, regional governor Oleksandr Ganzha said on Telegram.

in Russia or Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine during the war, though on a far smaller scale.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiba condemned the attack as undermining a peace push led by US President Donald Trump to end the four-year war.

US-backed trilateral talks between Ukraine and Russia have so far failed to resolve key differences between the two sides,

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At Narsingdi-1, rivals exchange smiles, not barbs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A rare display of camaraderie among rival candidates drew attention in the Narsingdi-1 (Sadar) constituency yesterday morning, as three contestants were seen chatting and exchanging light-hearted remarks while visiting polling centres.

BNP candidate Khairul Kabir Khokon, contesting with the sheaf of paddy symbol, Ibrahim Bhuiyan of the scales symbol, and Gonoodhikar Parishad candidate Advocate Shirin Akhter met at the Rajadi High School field in Narsingdi Sadar around 9:30am.

Voters and campaign workers present at the venue witnessed the exchange.

Despite being electoral opponents, the three greeted each other warmly and shared jokes, creating a relaxed atmosphere amid an otherwise competitive race.

At one point, one of them remarked, "We are on the side of a people's uprising," prompting laughter from those around. Many onlookers

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Canadian fossil reveals one of the first plant-eating animals

REUTERS

Scientists have unearthed in Canada's province of Nova Scotia the skull of a creature dating to about 307 million years ago that is one of the oldest-known plant-eating land vertebrates, representing a pivotal juncture in animal evolution.



The creature, named *Tyrannoroter heberti*, possessed a somewhat triangle-shaped skull that facilitated large cheek muscles for eating tough plant material, with a mouth full of specialised teeth to crush, shred and grind vegetation.

Tyrannoroter looked like a reptile but is not actually included in that class of animals, instead categorised as part of a group called microsaurs. While the researchers have discovered only its skull, they estimate based on the anatomy of related animals that *Tyrannoroter* was about 12 inches (30.5 cm) long, with a stocky build akin to today's blue-tongued skink.



Army personnel patrolling the Madhubagh area in the capital yesterday to prevent any untoward incidents during voting and ensure voters' safety and security.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

3 blind men defy all odds to cast vote

SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM, Narayanganj

Three visually impaired men travelled across districts yesterday to cast their ballots, saying they were determined to fulfil their civic duty and be recognised as equal citizens.



Mohammad Jewel, Monir Hossain and Mohammad Jasim arrived at polling centres in Narayanganj despite the challenges of their daily lives.

Jasim has been blind since birth, while the other two lost their sight in early childhood due to illness. The trio earn a living by hawking goods on public transport in different districts.

Around 12:30pm, Monir and Jewel were seen leaving the Haji Shamsuddin High School polling

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